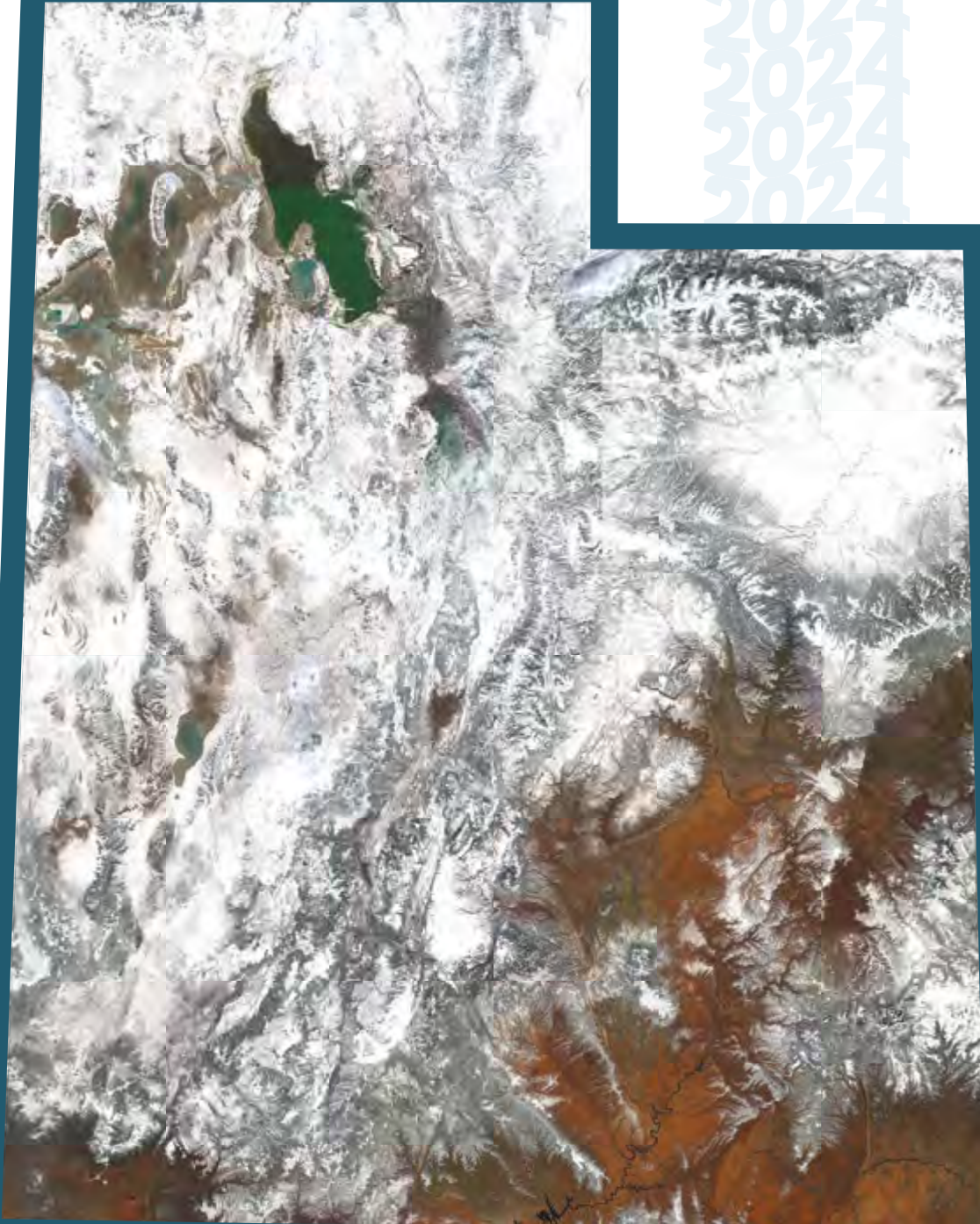


Utah Division of Water Resources

# Water for Utah 2024



Sentinel-2 satellite composite scene of Utah near its snow-cover maximum: January 30 - February 8, 2023

# Mission

## Plan • Conserve • Develop • Protect Utah's Water Resources



*Gunlock Reservoir spilling, March 2023.*

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# Director's message

In 2023, we received a gift, a reprieve. After multiple years of drought, low water supplies and dismal lake levels, we had an epic winter. Across the state, Mother Nature set record snow water equivalent (SWE) accumulation. Our previous record high was 26 inches of SWE; in 2023, SWE peaked at 30 inches. It was more than most of us hoped for. The potential flood risk was a big concern but overall, the runoff was well-behaved with minimal flooding. Most of our reservoirs have filled up, including significant increases at Great Salt Lake (over five feet) and Lake Powell (nearly 65 feet).

While I know this won't solve all of our troubles, it gives us breathing room while we meter secondary water, implement landscape incentives and help municipalities incorporate water into their general plans — all with the goal of making Utah more resilient to drought.

In addition to a fantastic winter, the Legislature once again made a significant investment in water conservation and infrastructure. Considering this year and last, over \$1 billion was appropriated and approximately \$431 million entrusted to the Division of Water Resources. State funds were made available for cloud seeding, ongoing landscaping conversion incentives, grants to assist cities for new general plan requirements and additional staff.

This year, some hallmark successes included the completion of the Millsite Dam rehabilitation in Emery County, hosting our

second Growing Water Smart Workshop, launching the statewide landscape conversion incentive program and facilitating the creation of multiple watershed councils.

Additionally, the board received applications for all of the \$268 million secondary metering grant money and has contracted \$167 million with secondary water suppliers thus far.

The success of the state and the division only occurs because of our amazing team. I am grateful for them and all of their diligent work.



*Candice Hasenyager, Director of the Division of Water Resources*

# Water supply

Utah's water systems face strain because of the changing climate, varying annual weather and a rapidly growing population. We are either in a drought or preparing for the next one. Thus, we must foster a drought-resilient mindset. To help facilitate this, the division works statewide to promote waterwise management practices and collaboration.

Due to 2023's extraordinary snowpack and smart water management, our reservoirs were around 80% full by the end of the irrigation season. This provided the division a springboard for ongoing implementation of the water conservation, monitoring and planning projects entrusted to us by the Legislature and detailed throughout the rest of this document.

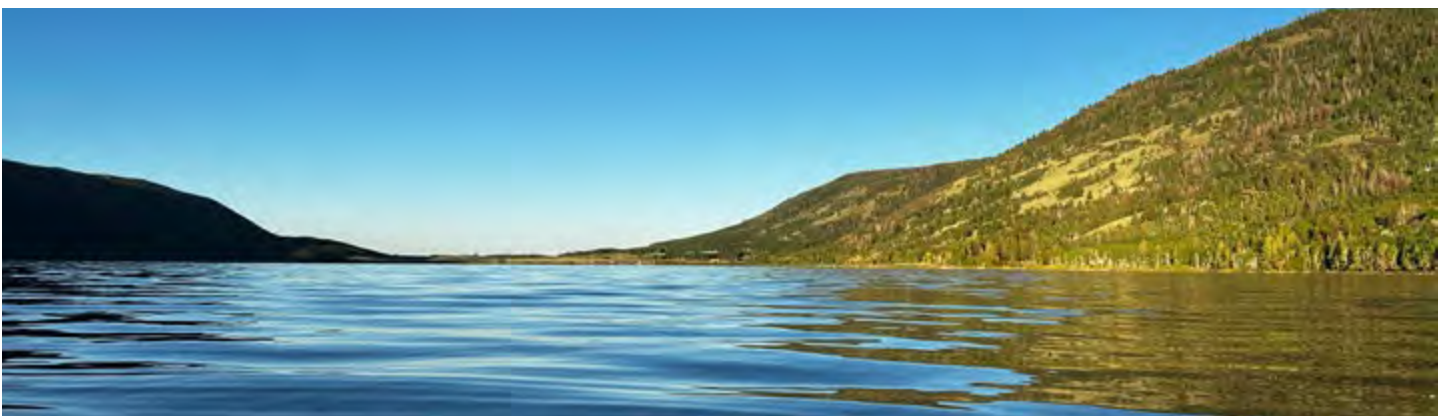
Having accurate information is a crucial part of planning for sustainable water management. For this reason, the division coordinates to make information available to a wide range of audiences and stakeholders. From water conditions updates published on [Drought.utah.gov](https://drought.utah.gov) to hosting

multi-agency webinars to data published on the [Open Data website](#) (pg. 15).

Additionally, the division updated its Drought Response Plan in 2022. This plan is utilized by the Drought Response Committee to coordinate emergency drought responses. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, Utah has experienced at least some level of drought every year since the year 2000. Therefore, the committee meets twice a year, regardless of drought conditions, allowing them to identify needs that may be beyond the scope of local communities.

## Waterwise management

- 2023's extraordinary snowpack allowed the division to even more successfully implement water conservation, monitoring, and planning projects.
- The division provides information critical to sustainable water management for a range of audiences.



*Fish Lake in August 2023.*






# Engagement and outreach

The division significantly increased engagement and outreach in 2023. Key connections continue to be built between our division, partners, stakeholders and the Utahns we serve by highlighting water-related projects, people and important updates on our social media channels and websites.

The division develops, maintains and supports:

- [Water.utah.gov](https://www.water.utah.gov)
- [ConserveWater.utah.gov](https://www.conservewater.utah.gov)
- [SlowTheFlow.org](https://www.slowtheflow.org)
- [Drought.utah.gov](https://www.drought.utah.gov)
- [GreatSaltLake.utah.gov](https://www.greatsaltlake.utah.gov)
- [UtahWaterBank.org](https://www.utahwaterbank.org)
- [GSLBasinPlan.utah.gov](https://www.gslbasinplan.utah.gov)
- [DNRInnerweb.utah.gov](https://www.dnrinnerweb.utah.gov)
- [Water.utah.gov/opendata](https://www.water.utah.gov/opendata)

The division also engages through our social media accounts.

-  - @UtahWaterRes
-  - @UtahWaterRes
-  - @UtahWaterRes
-  - @Utah Division of Water Resources
-  - @UtahWaterRes

Our rapidly growing online presence serves as a key source for trusted information and an opportunity for connection to Utah's water resources across platforms and audiences.

The ever popular Lawn Watering Guide is a great example of growing engagement across all our platforms. During the 2023

irrigation season, it reached approximately 808,000 unique users on our social media platforms and an additional 54,243 users on our division's conservation website.

A combined total of over **366,294 users** visited [Water.utah.gov](https://www.water.utah.gov) and [ConserveWater.utah.gov](https://www.conservewater.utah.gov) alone this year, resulting in over **695,250 total visits**. This is a **60.57%** increase in users and **88.17%** increase in sessions from 2022.

Pages with the most visits:

- Reservoir Levels App - [Water.utah.gov/reservoirlevels](https://www.water.utah.gov/reservoirlevels) (233,009 views)
- Snowpack page - [Water.utah.gov/snowpack](https://www.water.utah.gov/snowpack) (142,832 views)
- Lawn Watering Guide - [ConserveWater.utah.gov/weekly-lawn-watering-guide](https://www.conservewater.utah.gov/weekly-lawn-watering-guide) (121,040 views)

Content posted to the division's social media accounts was **viewed 5,560,841 times**. We also experienced **1,067,925 audience interactions** (reactions, comments, shares, clicks, messages), affirming an active connection with our varied audience. In addition, we acquired **900 new** Instagram, **1,660 new** Facebook and **995 new** X (formerly Twitter) followers.

## Key metrics

- **9 websites** and **5 social accounts**.
- Main website users **increased by 60.57%**.
- Social media accounts gained **3,555 new followers**.

# Board of Water Resources

For 76 years, the Board of Water Resources has provided financial assistance to irrigation companies, municipalities and water districts to construct **1,584** water projects. The board consists of nine appointed individuals: eight who represent Utah's river districts and one who represents Great Salt Lake interests. The board has specific powers and duties that include approving projects, administering funding and contracting with agencies at local, state and federal levels.

In Fiscal Year 2023, the board provided funds to **62 projects** with a total contribu-

tion of over **\$260 million**. These projects included:

- 55 secondary meter projects
- 3 dam safety upgrades
- 3 agricultural efficiency and improvement projects
- 1 large municipal project

## Board funding totals

- **\$1.34 billion** in water project funding over 76 years for 1,584 projects.
- **\$260 million** in funding for 62 projects in Fiscal Year 2023.



*Millsite Reservoir spillway, a board-funded project completed in 2023.*

# Secondary metering

Many residential connections use secondary water (untreated water delivered through a separate system) for outside irrigation. When connections aren't metered, it is difficult to track and conserve secondary water. Estimates indicate that wasteful outdoor water use can be significantly reduced by installing meters and informing users of their water usage.

Passed in 2022, Utah Code 73-10-34 (HB 242) requires secondary water suppliers that have a pressurized secondary system to install meters on all end user connections, with some exceptions. Meters must be installed by January 1, 2030. Some secondary water providers may be exempt from installing meters; however, they are still required to implement other water conservation methods as outlined in the legislation.



*A meter for secondary water.*

In addition, the Legislature appropriated **\$268 million** in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grants for the purchase and installation of secondary water meters.

The Board of Water Resources was tasked with distributing these funds. The board was able to award the full amount of these funds over three application periods in 2022 and 2023. Since August 2022, secondary water providers across the state have been utilizing ARPA grant funds and Board of Water Resources loans to install meters in their systems.

The division also recently sent a survey to secondary water providers to determine how many meters have already been installed and how many are projected to be installed. 43 out of 62 water providers responded to the survey. **In 2022 and 2023, 24,196 meters were installed** according to the survey. **72,603 meters are projected to be installed** from 2024 to 2026.

For more information about secondary water metering, please visit [Water.utah.gov/secondary-metering](https://Water.utah.gov/secondary-metering).

## Metering progress

- Wasteful outdoor water use can be significantly reduced by installing meters and informing users of their water usage.
- The Board of Water Resources has contracted nearly **\$167 million in grants** and **\$69 million in loans** with secondary water suppliers thus far.
- According to a division survey, **24,196** meters have been installed!



# Dam safety

## Funding

The Legislature has appropriated ongoing grant funding in varying amounts since 1992 for projects to bring high hazard dams up to state minimum safety standards. From 1997 to 2007, approximately \$4.3 million was appropriated annually. In 2008, it was reduced to about \$700,000, and from 2009 to the present, funding has been **\$3.8 million per year**. Based on an inflation-adjusted average, **the cost to upgrade a dam is \$4.6 million**.

One-time funds were also appropriated for dam safety upgrades in fiscal years 2015 (\$11 million general fund), 2019 (\$8.425 million restricted), 2022 (\$18 million restricted) and 2024 (\$25 million general fund).

## High hazard dam rating

A dam is rated high hazard if there is risk of loss of life, infrastructure or property in the event of failure. Utah has **over 170 high hazard dams**. Approximately **101** of these dams need work to meet minimum safety standards.

Furthermore, there are several moderate hazard dams the Division of Water Rights' Dam Safety Office is currently assessing to see whether their classification should be raised to high hazard. Homes are being built closer to dams, increasing safety risks. Thus, even more dams likely fall under the high hazard rating and will need upgrades to meet minimum state standards.

## Recent projects

Dam safety upgrades to Millsite, DMAD and Sevier Bridge dams are nearing completion. Upgrades for these three dams cost \$39.5 million, \$14.75 million and \$27 million respectively, for **a total of \$81.25 million**. The board provided just over \$51.5 million in grant funds. The U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service contributed approximately \$21.8 million grant towards the Millsite Dam project. The balance of the costs were borne by the dam owner or through loans with the board.

Work is anticipated to begin on Jones, Lindsay-Bennett, Frog Hollow, Gypsum Wash, Stucki, Warner Draw, Koosharem and Santaquin dams in Fiscal Year 2025.

## Dam safety stats

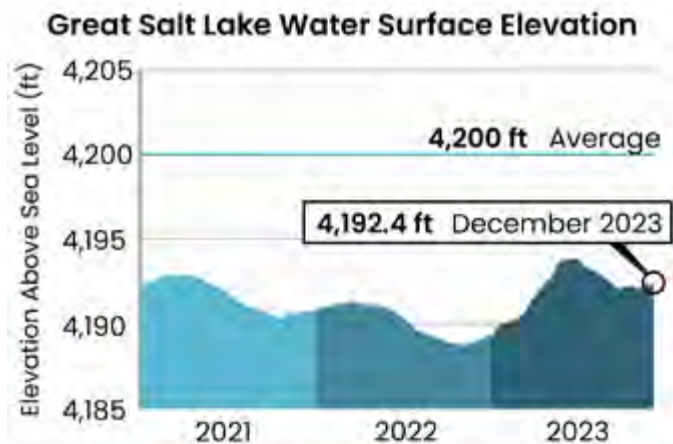
- An estimated **\$464 million is needed** in order for the remaining high hazard dams to be brought up to minimum safety standards.
- At the current funding rate, it's estimated to take about **122 years to bring current high hazard dams up to safety standards**. This does not take into account the rise of high hazard dams resulting from hazard creep.

# Great Salt Lake

Great Salt Lake is the largest saline lake in the Western Hemisphere, boasting a rich web of relationships between people, land, water, food and survival. The division aids Great Salt Lake by assessing and modeling the lake and its river systems; facilitating water conservation; coordinating with stakeholders; and managing Utah's cloud seeding program (pg. 9).

## Elevation

In November 2022, Great Salt Lake reached a new record low elevation of 4188.5 feet. 2023's snowpack and waterwise management provided much-needed relief to the lake, which rose about 5.5 feet between November 2022 – July 2023. This is a promising start for further actions.



Great Salt Lake elevations 2021-2023.

## GSLBIP

The Great Salt Lake Basin Integrated Plan (GSLBIP) merges 2022 HB 429's integrated watershed assessment and a federal WaterSMART grant for a Basin Study.

GSLBIP will collaboratively explore options to address water supply imbalances, increase supply reliability and avoid ecosystem degradation. This includes a strategy trade-off analysis within each river basin to assess costs and benefits of meeting varied water resource goals.

GSLBIP is divided into two phases. In 2023, the division completed phase one, creating a Work Plan. It synthesizes water information, literature and data across the basin. In addition to creating a [situational assessment](#) of current conditions, the Work Plan provides guidance on the communication and collaboration required to successfully involve stakeholders in the watershed. **The division unveiled the Work Plan to the Legislature and numerous stakeholder groups in November 2023.**

The division is now in phase two, carrying out the tasks necessary to create the GSLBIP. **Developing the actionable GSLBIP will conclude in late 2026.**

Visit [GSLBasinPlan.utah.gov](https://GSLBasinPlan.utah.gov) for more information.

# Great Salt Lake



*Great Salt Lake in April 2023. Its management requires coordination between many agencies and stakeholders.*

## **GreatSaltLake.utah.gov**

The departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality co-developed **GreatSaltLake.utah.gov**. This site brings a wide-range of information pertaining to the lake together in one, centralized place.

The site's development and maintenance team includes two division employees. This team received the **2023 Utah IT Excellence Award for Best Partnership** for inter-agency teamwork and public service.

## **Cross-agency coordination**

Management of Great Salt Lake is complex. The division coordinates with federal, state and local government agencies and other stakeholders in protecting and preserving the lake. Connections with federal partners are rapidly expanding as more work is completed in partnership with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Geological Survey.

In addition, members of the division are part of the state's **Great Salt Lake Strike Team**. The division is also providing leadership to develop watershed councils (pg. 13). The division works closely with the Office of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner and other state agencies as it develops the GSL-BIP and other projects.

## **Great Salt Lake highlights**

- **GSLBIP is in phase two**, creating an actionable plan to conclude in 2026.
- **GreatSaltLake.utah.gov is a new, important resource** for information regarding actions, management and other data about the lake in a centralized place.
- The **division continues to collaborate with state, federal and local agencies** to protect the lake.

# Cloud seeding

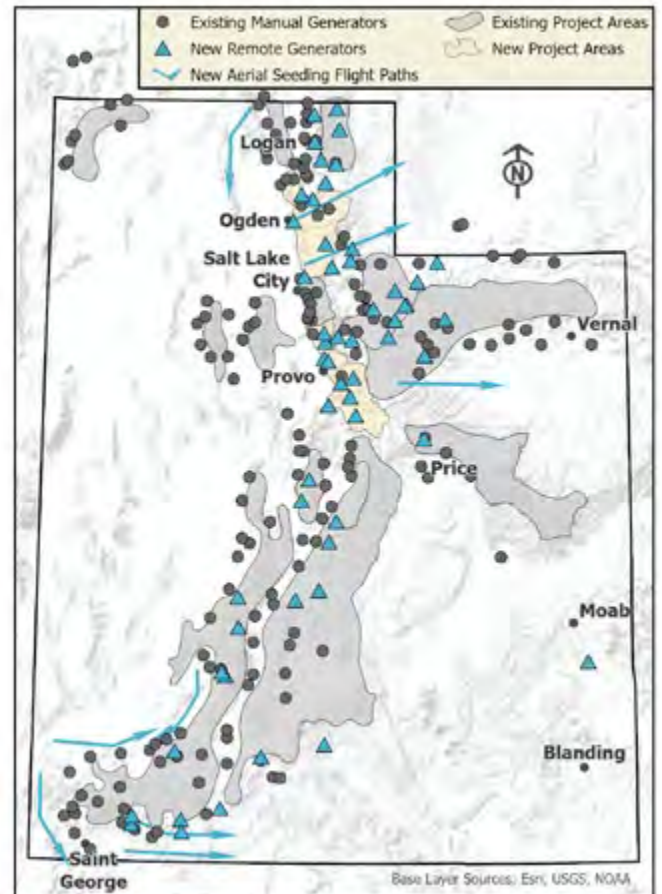
The division held a first-of-its-kind cloud seeding symposium at Snowbird in September 2023. The event brought together scientists, stakeholders and legislators to discuss recent scientific advancements and the future of cloud seeding in Utah and the West. The event was well-received and covered by multiple news outlets.

Using its new Legislative funding (**\$12 million one-time** and **\$5 million ongoing**), the division has already begun to expand the cloud seeding program. A full-time meteorologist has been hired to oversee and manage the program, and additional developments are planned for the coming years:

- Establishment of two new cloud seeding areas along the Wasatch Front in the Great Salt Lake Basin.
- Leasing of two airplanes for ongoing aerial seeding programs in northern and southern Utah.
- Deployment of 20 remotely operated cloud seeding generators in Fall 2023, (with an additional 100 planned over time, statewide).

## Expanding cloud seeding

- The division's cloud seeding symposium successfully brought together scientists, stakeholders and legislators to discuss advancements.
- Expansion of the cloud seeding program has begun and three future developments have been identified.



*Current and planned cloud seeding operations throughout Utah.*

# Water conservation

Water conservation remained a top priority in 2023. The division implemented new incentive and rebate programs, educated the public and worked with state facilities to strengthen water conservation.

## Landscape incentive program

The new statewide [landscape incentive program](#) launched on May 1, 2023, and has already received **over 5,000 applications**. The division partnered with Central Utah, Jordan Valley, Washington County and Weber Basin water conservancy districts to increase program awareness and funding. Legislative program funding in 2023 was **\$5 million** (one-time) and **\$3 million** (ongoing).

So far, the participants have replaced **4 million square feet of grass** with water-wise landscape options, which will save an estimated **104 million gallons annually**.

In addition, **41 new communities adopted waterwise standards** for new development, allowing their residents to participate in this program and upping the total of participating communities to **61**.

## Utah Water Ways

Established through [2023 HB 307](#), Utah Water Ways is a public-private partnership that supports citizen and business efforts to optimize the state's water use to meet conservation goals. Its board has been organized and executive director, Tage Flint, hired.

## Slow the Flow

This statewide partnership and public information campaign finished its 22nd year strong. Messaging shifted from a short-term drought focus to fostering a **longer-term drought-resilient attitude**.

## Smart controller and toilet rebates

The division celebrated five years of smart controller rebates and four years of toilet rebates. Over the past five years, **almost 30,000 rebates** have been paid to Utahns for these devices.

## State facility conservation

The division has met regularly with the Division of Facilities and Construction Management to collect data, coordinate efforts and help decrease water use at state facilities to meet [2022 HB 121's](#) state facility conservation requirements.

## Conservation successes

- Landscape incentives facilitated the replacement of **4 million square feet of grass**, which may save **104 million gallons annually**.
- Partnerships like Utah Water Ways and Slow the Flow flourished.
- Almost **30,000 rebates** have been paid to Utahns for smart controllers and toilets over five years.
- State facilities are working to meet water conservation requirements.

# Regional water conservation goals

In Utah, population growth coupled with a climate-induced decrease of water supply makes water scarcity an increasing concern. Utahns must work together to protect the quality and resiliency of our shared water supply.

Water conservation is critical for maintaining stability in available water assets. Therefore, in 2019, the division established conservation goals for Utah's nine municipal and industrial areas. The division's report outlines these benchmarks and recommends practices and strategies for improving water conservation.

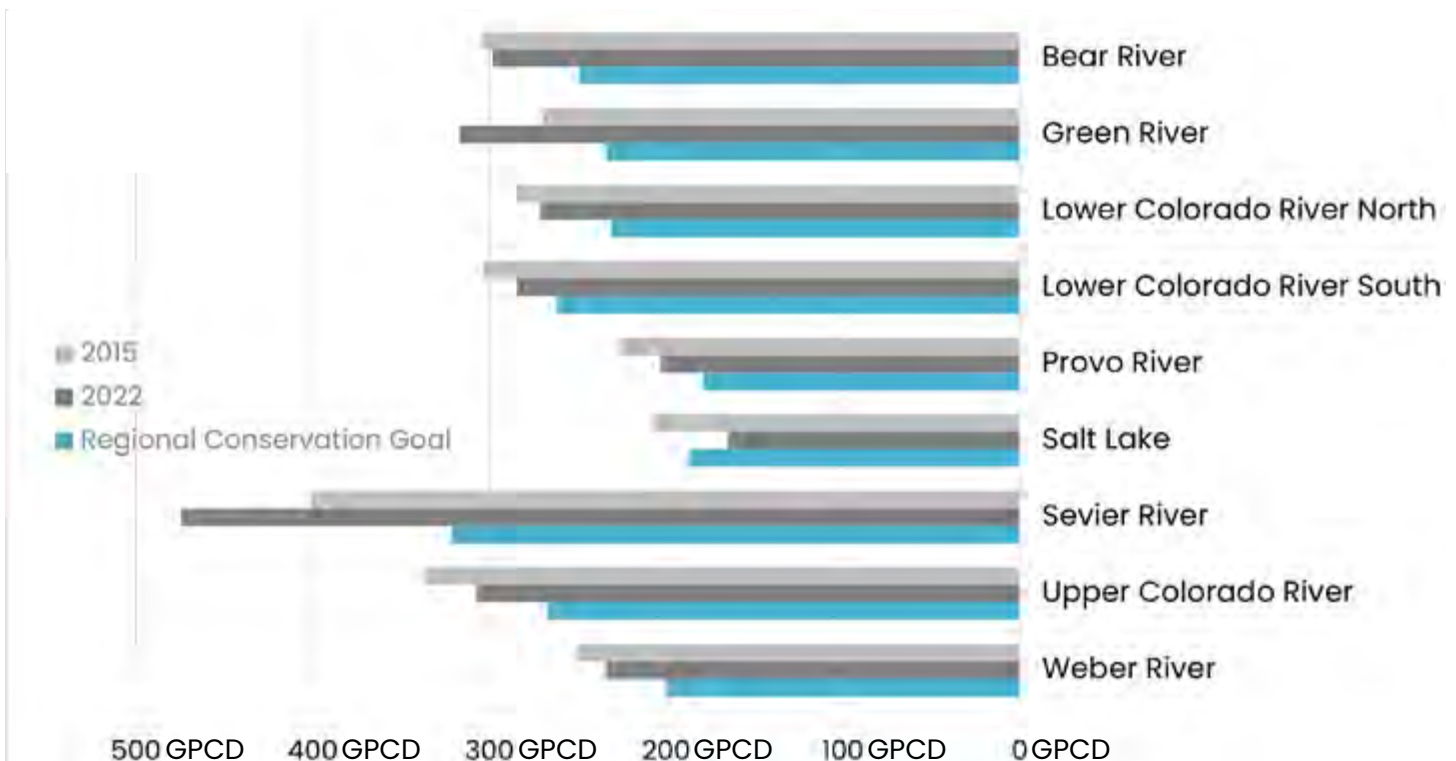
The division continues to pursue and support implementation of regional goals. Pro-

viding ongoing resources and information for water suppliers, end users, municipalities and counties helps further these efforts.

Read the report and explore the regional conservation goals dashboard on [ConserveWater.utah.gov/regional-water-conservation-goals](https://ConserveWater.utah.gov/regional-water-conservation-goals).

## Unique, guiding goals

- 2019's regional conservation goals establish a unique water conservation benchmark for each of Utah's nine municipal and industrial areas.
- The division's conservation and coordination actions facilitate meeting these goals.



Snapshot of 2022's water used in gallons per capita day (GPCD) as compared to 2015's baseline use and the regional conservation goals to be met by 2030.

# Integrating land and water planning

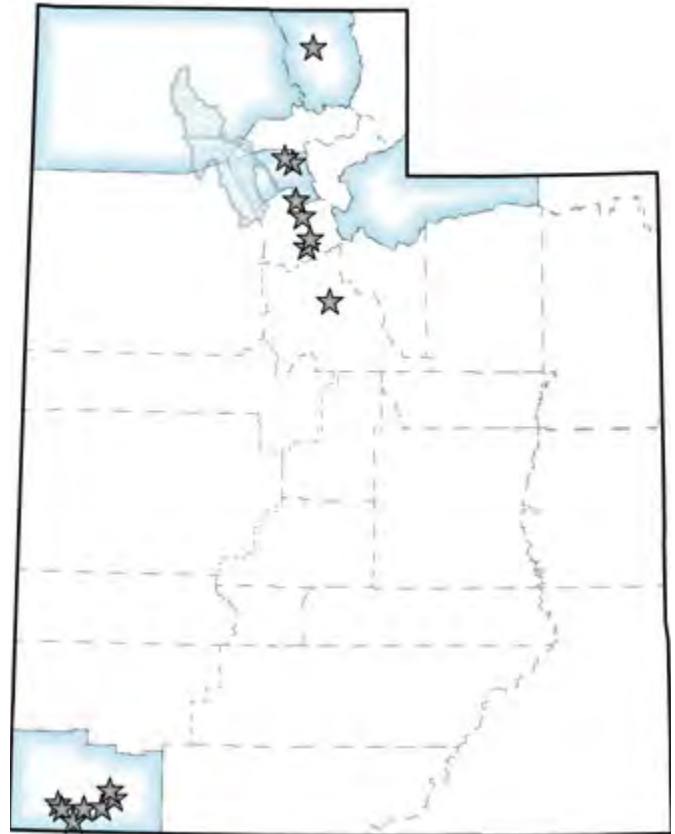
New community developments and increasing water demands led state legislators to pass [2022 SB 110](#). The bill encourages communities to address water security in their general plans. Elements include long-term water supply planning, implementing water conservation measures to reach regional conservation goals, defining water efficiency standards for new developments and considering sustainable landscaping styles.

In 2023, the division prepared groundwork for providing technical assistance to local governments. This groundwork helps facilitate the implementation of water use and preservation elements in general plans.

## Growing Water Smart Utah

Historically, land and water use planning efforts have occurred separately. The division recognized the need to bridge this gap as communities across the state continue to report rapid growth and created the Growing Water Smart Utah workshop program to address this need.

At these workshops, city officials and water providers meet to discuss their communities' challenges and develop plans and goals to meet them. So far, these workshops have helped to integrate land use and water planning in **19 Utah communities**. In 2023, the division hosted a workshop for cities and communities in Northern Utah. In January 2024, the division hosted its third workshop, focusing on southern Utah communities.



*Communities and regions that have participated in Growing Water Smart Workshops.*

For more information about integrating water and land-use planning, please visit [Water.utah.gov/integrated-water-land-planning](https://Water.utah.gov/integrated-water-land-planning).

## Integrating growth

- The division continues to bring communities together to integrate water and land planning in order to address community needs and water supply challenges.
- The division has successfully hosted **three** Growing Water Smart Workshops with **more to come**.

# Watershed councils

In 2020, the Utah Legislature passed the Watershed Councils Act (HB 166). Watershed councils provide an opportunity for local stakeholders to share information and resources. A coordinated approach will optimize available resources. This is essential to holistic watershed planning and management.

The division successfully created the **state-wide Utah Watersheds Council**, and continues to help facilitate the formation of **12 local watershed councils**.



*Utah's planned watershed councils.*

In 2023, the division helped to establish the first six of those local councils:

- Bear River
- Jordan River
- Uintah
- Utah Lake
- Weber River
- West Desert

The division is excited about this progress after more than a year of extensive outreach to educate stakeholders about watershed councils and gauge their interest in forming local councils. So far, broad support exists to form local councils across the state. The division is moving to organize the remaining councils as soon as possible.

For more information, see [Water.utah.gov/watershed-councils](https://Water.utah.gov/watershed-councils).

## Council actions

- The watershed councils discuss water policy and resource issues at watershed and state levels.
- **Six out of 12** local watershed councils are now established. The division is working to establish the remaining councils.



# Water banking and water marketing

## Water marketing

Water marketing encompasses all forms of water exchanges between users. Water leasing is a commonly used form of water marketing and represents a local, voluntary and temporary exchange of water.

Water banking facilitates water leases between users. Water marketing arrangements of all kinds are flexible, win-win tools that can generate income for water right owners, bring stability and order to local water systems and increase access to water.

## Water banking

[Utah Code 73-31](#), the Utah Water Banking Act, legislates the means of creating a Utah water bank. Two kinds are eligible for approval:

- A contract water bank may be formed between specific entities for water leasing contracts that meet the act's criteria.
- A statutory water bank may be formed to facilitate an open and accessible market for willing lessors and lessees and is run on private governance documents such as articles, bylaws, or other organizational documents.

Four pilot projects were identified based on stakeholder interest to begin exploring water marketing solutions in 2020:

- Price River: resulted in the creation of the Carbon Canal Company Contract Water Bank. The first leasing is expected

to begin in the 2024 season.

- Cache County: resulted in a two-party water leasing contract.
- Snyderville/East Canyon: resulted in the installation of new telemetry stations to better evaluate flows and supply. Local stakeholders intend to explore leasing activities under [2022 HB 33](#).
- Uintah County: resulted in the creation of the First Water Bank of Utah, a statutory water bank.

All of these projects provided valuable lessons that will facilitate the creation of future water banks and demonstrate the need for flexibility in water marketing solutions.

Find more details about water marketing—including water banking, water marketing strategies, pilot projects and applications—at [UtahWaterBank.org](#).

## Water marketing takes off

- Three years of pilot water marketing efforts culminated in 2023. Four pilot projects provided valuable insights for future water marketing projects, including **both types of water banks**.
- The first statutory water bank “First Water Bank of Utah” was established and approved by the Board of Water Resources in October 2023.
- Extensive information, tools and resources on water banking and water marketing are now available on [UtahWaterBank.org](#).

# Open Water Data website

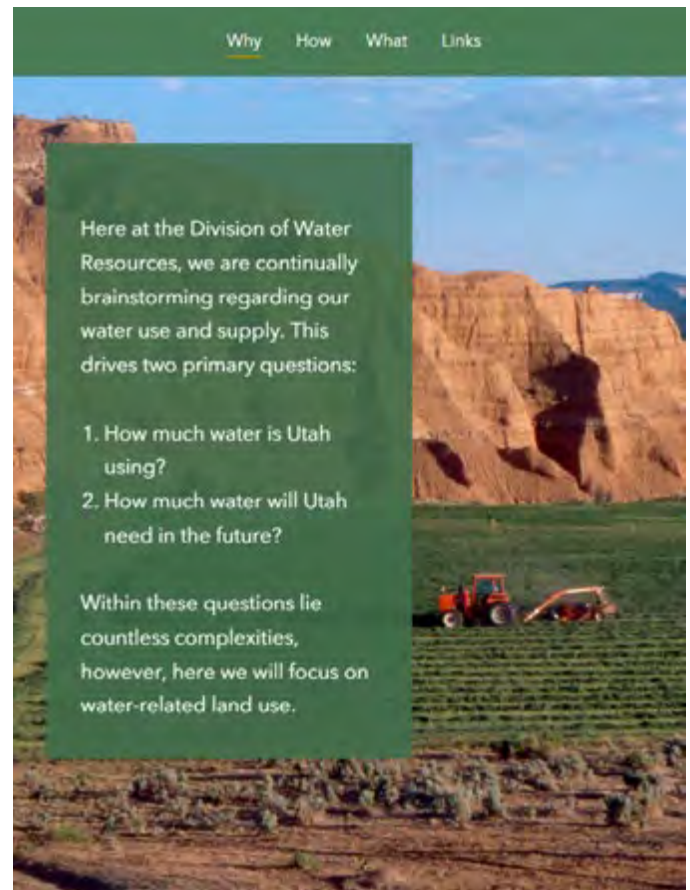
The division continues to improve the discoverability and transparency of data maintained by the state by hosting information on its Open Water Data website. Major datasets maintained include products centered around municipal and industrial water use, water-related land use and the state's water budget.



*The 2020 municipal and industrial (M&I) app, which provides a statewide, spatial look. A written report and raw data are also available to download.*

Division staff develop and refine interactive apps, maps and data visualizations which endeavor to make water issues more accessible. The division also includes external links to other agencies who administer and provide other water-related data for Utah and the Intermountain West.

Visit [Water.utah.gov/opendata](https://Water.utah.gov/opendata) to learn more.



*In 2023, a storymap debuted to complement the water-related land use app, highlighting the complexities of Utah's water use.*

## Online data access

Open Water Data improves access to water data and issues through a variety of products, including the M&I app and water-related land use app.

# Water development projects

## Lake Powell Pipeline

Drought, climate change and current demand will require significant water-saving actions by the seven states that receive water from the Colorado River. This dedication to resolving river issues has delayed the schedule of the Lake Powell Pipeline.

To address current water demands, water suppliers in Washington County have shifted their focus to water conservation and reuse to more efficiently use the locally available water resources. This change in focus has **significantly delayed the need** for the pipeline. The proposed project, which was triggered by the [2006 Lake Powell Pipeline Development Act](#), is still part of the long-term plan for Washington County to meet future demands after optimization of local sources.



*The view from Alstrom Point at Lake Powell.*

## Bear River Development

In 1991, the Utah Legislature passed the [Bear River Development Act](#), which directs the division to “develop the surface waters of the Bear River and its tributaries through the planning and construction of reservoirs and associated facilities.” The act indicates that the division should study, plan and construct facilities to supply 220,000 acre-feet of water.

In 2019, a Bear River Development feasibility study was completed that included 13 conceptual project designs that could potentially supply the required water, specifically for a growing population’s municipal use.

The study provided updated cost estimates ranging from **\$1.5-2.8 billion** for engineering and construction.

The division is currently acquiring right-of-way from willing sellers to preserve potential corridors for a large-diameter pipeline through Box Elder County. Early acquisition for corridor preservation reduces future costs and minimizes disruptions to the surrounding communities.

As projections change in population growth, water use, water supply and hydrology, additional studies will be required to adjust projected need. Studies could include the effects of climate change, in regards to potential future hydrology patterns, and studies regarding potential impacts to Great Salt Lake.

# Water development projects



*Any Bear River Development will account for impacts to Great Salt Lake.*

Additionally, an Environmental Impact Study will need to be completed, as outlined by the National Environmental Policy Act.

In 1991, it was assumed that the water from this project would be needed by 2015. However, due to ongoing, concerted efforts between the water districts and the division, such as water conservation, education and secondary metering, the current projected need for water is now **2050 or beyond**. This is a 35-year delay!

The water districts and division will continue to seek out and utilize other potential

solutions to delay the need for water from the Bear River Development. However, current projections still indicate the eventual need for this water as the population continues to grow.

## Planning ahead

- **Water conservation and reuse are being emphasized** in Washington County to more efficiently use the local water.
- The Lake Powell Pipeline is part of the county's long-term plan to meet demands after local sources have been optimized.
- Updated cost estimates for Bear River Development are **\$1.5-2.8 billion**.
- Early acquisition for corridor preservation reduces future costs and minimizes disruptions to the surrounding communities.
- The current projected need for Bear River Development is **2050, a delay of 35 years** based on the initial 1991 study.
- The water districts and division will continue to seek out and utilize other potential solutions to delay the need for water from the Bear River Development.

# Colorado River and Bear River

## Colorado River Authority of Utah

The [Colorado River Authority of Utah](#) consists of seven board members with five representatives for regions within Utah's Colorado River Basin, one tribal representative and one governor's appointee. In addition, advisory councils have been established under designated regions (North, Central and South) representing other basin interests. The river authority's mission is "to protect, conserve, use, and develop Utah's waters of the Colorado River system." The division coordinates with and supports the Colorado River Authority to help fulfill this mission.

## Seven states negotiations and drought response

Negotiations regarding the operations of lakes Powell and Mead are steadily moving forward, between the seven Colorado River Basin states, while the basin states actively deal with the immediate drought concerns.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation issued a Notice of Intent to enter into an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process for new reservoir operations on June 16, 2023. Utah has been actively engaged with the representatives from all basin states to develop an acceptable basin states alternative to submit for this EIS.

In June of 2022, the Secretary of the Interior informed the basin states that significant reductions in water use of 2-4 million acre-feet would be required to sustain the Colorado River system in the short term. The Upper Basin states have responded by producing a five-point plan of action with activities intended to support this goal. This plan includes conservation measures and expanded monitoring and measurement efforts. As part of these conservation efforts, Utah water users voluntarily participated in the System Conservation Pilot Program in 2023, contributing 15,000 acre-feet of the 38,000 acre-feet conserved by the Upper Basin states. On October 25, 2023, the U.S.



*Seven states share the Colorado River's waters; Utah coordinates effectively to protect, conserve and use them.*

# Colorado River and Bear River

Bureau of Reclamation released a revised draft EIS to the 2007 Interim Guidelines that stipulates a total reduction of 3 million acre-feet to be taken by the Lower Basin during the next three years.

Utah is represented by its Colorado River Commissioner Gene Shawcroft, with support from the Department of Natural Resources, the river authority and other legal and technical advisors. These negotiations are vital to protecting Utah's interests in the Colorado River.

## Law of the River

The Law of the River requires the Upper Basin states to send 75 million acre-feet of water on a 10-year rolling average to the Lower Basin states ([1922 Colorado River Compact](#)). During the last 10 years — including some of the driest years on record — the Upper Basin has delivered 85.6 million acre-feet of water to the Lower Basin.

## Bear River

The Bear River Compact quantifies the allowed water depletion to Idaho, Utah and Wyoming. Depletions after 1975 are determined by a procedure approved by the Bear River Commission. This year, the Utah Division of Water Resources worked with the Idaho Department of Water Resources and the Wyoming State Engineer's office, through the commission's Technical Advisory Committee, to finalize an updated [Depletion Study](#). The Technical Advisory

Committee recommended ways to improve the process.

With the passing of [HB 207](#) in 2023, the chair of the Utah Commission has shifted from a designee chosen by the Board of Water Resources (historically the director of the division) to the State Engineer.

With funding from the Bear River Compact, in 2023 the U.S. Geological Survey completed a [five-year investigation](#) into evaporation and water quality of Bear Lake. Parties have agreed to fund the investigation for a sixth year. The states have also been collaborating on water quality tracking on tributaries to Bear Lake.

## River coordination

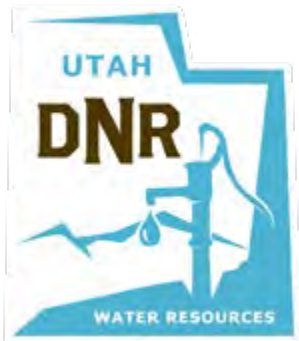
- The division supports the Colorado River Authority of Utah as it protects, conserves, uses and develops Utah's share of the river.
- Utah is actively engaged in negotiations and conservation efforts regarding the Colorado River.
- The division worked with interstate partners through the Bear River Commission to deliver a depletion study and continues to support other commission endeavors.

# Statutory authority

- Utah Code 73-10-15-17—State Water Plan
- Utah Code 73-10-32—Water Conservation Plan Act
- Utah Code 73-10-33—Water Conveyance Facilities Safety Act
- Utah Code 73-10-34—Secondary Water Metering
- Utah Code 73-10c—Water Development Coordinating Council
- Utah Code 73-10d—Privatization Projects
- Utah Code 73-10g-104—Water Infrastructure Restricted Account
- Utah Code 73-12a—Colorado River Compact
- Utah Code 73-15—Modification of Weather
- Utah Code 73-16—Amended Bear River Compact
- Utah Code 73-19—Colombia Interstate Compact
- Utah Code 73-20—Emergency Water Resources
- Utah Code 73-23—West Desert Pumping Project
- Utah Code 73-26—Bear River Development Act
- Utah Code 73-28—Lake Powell Pipeline Development Act



*Utah State Capitol, January 2024.*



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